



February 25, 2015

Mayor Rahm Emanuel  
121 N LaSalle Street  
Chicago City Hall 4th Floor  
Chicago, IL 60602

The Honorable Rahm Emanuel,

Amnesty International is deeply concerned by the recent report in The Guardian regarding alleged Chicago police practices at a facility known as Homan Square, including allegations of beatings and disappearances of people detained there.

Among many disturbing allegations in the Guardian article is the claim that, unlike the standard practice when someone is detained at a police precinct, individuals taken to Homan Square are not formally processed whereby a public, searchable record regarding witnesses, suspects or others who end up inside the facility appear in any database indicating their location. It is further alleged that lawyers and relatives have no method to determine their clients' and family members' whereabouts and that those lawyers who have attempted to gain access to Homan Square are most often turned away, even as their clients remain in custody inside. These are allegations are shocking, and, if proven valid, would be in clear violation of international law and standards on the treatment of those under any form of detention.

International law strictly prohibits the use of torture or ill-treatment and enforced disappearances. In order to help prevent such violations from ever occurring, international standards require that once a person is detained, there shall be duly recorded and communicated to the detained person, or his counsel:

- (a) The reasons for the arrest;
- (b) The time of the arrest and the taking of the arrested person to a place of custody as well as that of the arrest person's first appearance before a judicial or other authority;
- (c) The identity of the law enforcement officials concerned;
- (d) Precise information concerning the place of custody.

International law further obligates governments to investigate allegations of human rights violations; disclose the truth about violations; prosecute those responsible; and ensure remedy for victims, including reparations, truth and justice.

The report on the Homan Square facility comes as the City of Chicago continues to fall far short in meeting its obligations under international human rights law to ensure accountability and remedy for torture and ill-treatment by Chicago Police operating under the direction of former Commander Jon Burge from 1972-1991.

As the Mayor of Chicago, you have a responsibility under US and international law to ensure that human rights violations are not committed within the city and that, when human rights violations do occur, victims' rights to truth, accountability justice and reparations are fulfilled.

We therefore urge you to:

- Open an independent and impartial investigation into the allegations made about human rights violations at the Homan Square facility and make the results public.
- Allow Amnesty International and other independent human and civil rights organizations and monitors full, unrestricted access to the Homan Square facility.
- Meet with Amnesty International to discuss additional steps the City of Chicago should take to prevent and end human rights violations, ensure accountability and bring Chicago Police practices into full conformity with international standards.

We also take this opportunity to reiterate our call that you publicly support the proposed Chicago City Council Ordinance providing Reparations for the Chicago Police Torture Survivors, including full rehabilitation, restitution, compensation and apology.

We look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible about providing full access to the Homan Facility. Please contact me at (212) 633-4205 or [shawkins@aiusa.org](mailto:shawkins@aiusa.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven W. Hawkins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steven" and last name "Hawkins" clearly legible.

Steven W. Hawkins  
Executive Director  
Amnesty International USA